1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

This type of smoke-house, which can be used by anyone, is usually built in the forest. The Bella Coola have great confidence in the use of one as a means of curing all types of internal ailments, especially from the bad effects of water which is believed to have entered the blood. In former years many patients were blinded by the steam affecting their eyes, so that a recent improvement has been the construction of a door-like opening through which the head projects. Many stories are told of people being cured in this way after a white doctor had abandoned hope. 757

No Bella Coola had heard of a smoke-house large enough to contain more than a single individual, and a question whether they were ever used as meeting-places was regarded as highly humorous and absurd. [343]

For Ailments of the Heart

The patient must eat some of his own excrement mixed with certain herbs, of which it was impossible to learn the species. This remedy can be used only by the members of certain ancestral families. [424]

For the Blood

The following medicine is the property of certain families; consequently, anyone else who wishes to use it must obtain the services of an owner to apply it, and must recompense him for so doing. [424]

The man who is to apply the remedy locates a pond where water-lilies are growing and then searches for four spruce saplings growing in line, approximately east to west. He cuts four branches from the east side of each tree and lays these beside the pond with a small space between each bunch. Then he pulls up some lily roots, lays them in the three gaps between the boughs, and wraps the whole into a bundle with a cord consisting of alternate strands of dyed and undyed cedar-bark which he winds around, clock-wise. On returning home, the practitioner must not carry his burden through the door but

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE5

since each fisherman provided one when his box was filled.

No one is allowed to drink water immediately after eating the first olachen of the spring, since to do so would cause a flood. It is considered most improper for a child to cry soon after partaking of this food; if he does so, he is quieted by having nettles stuffed into his mouth. As already described, if a person dies before the first fish have passed through his bowels, a shaman must wipe his lips with cedar-bark.

After the first meal of olachen, stakes for the nets can be driven, and the restrictions become less exacting. Women are not allowed to assist in fishing, but the men devote their full time to the task, working with zest and energy.[1] An abundant supply of olachen is a source of joy, and all listen eagerly for the singing of the thrush, *smamaxaxlt*, which signifies that the nets are full to bursting. Half jocularly, people invite the bird to come and eat, but his melody is interpreted as:

"I shall eat when the river is full."

RITES CONNECTED WITH THE FIRST SPRING SALMON[2]

Salmon is the most important article of Bella Coola diet and the rites which accompany the earliest taking of the fish are relatively complicated.

When the first spring salmon have been caught, they are laid in the canoe with their heads all pointing eastward, upstream. The fisherman poles to shore, but instead of landing his catch, he fastens the salmon to a stake driven at the edge of the bank so that they remain in the water. A number of posts are usually placed in readiness, each decorated with alternate spirals of dyed and undyed cedar-bark and crowned with an eagle's tail. Each day one or two more fish may be caught, but all are left in the water until the first have become soft, thus giving sufficient time for the necessary preparations on shore. It is the duty of every owner of a salmon-weir to build near its end a so-called Spring Salmon House, a shed-like

[1] For a description of olachen fishing, see Appendix A.
[2] Cf. Boas, p. 78.

L:McGowath E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NES Bellacoola NES

structure with a roof but without side walls. To this the successful fisherman brings long strings of dyed and undyed cedar-bark, eagle down, and spoons made of maple-bark; in this task he is assisted by his relatives as well as by anyone else willing to help.

When all has been prepared, the fisherman asks the men of the village to gather on the bank to assist him. No one is compelled to do so, but in actual fact everyone is glad to be present unless prevented by some valid reason. A friend takes a canoe pole and points at the head of the first salmon, while all call in unison, *xaē'ĕxi*, a word for which no meaning is known, and which is said to have been used unintelligibly for many generations. If he is standing on the south bank of the stream, the fisherman passes his left hand outside his right, seizes the fish behind the neck with the former, and by the tail with the latter; then he turns around sunwise, uncrossing his arms, so that his catch is still pointing upstream. If the village is on the north side of the river, the position of the hands is reversed. He carries the salmon to the Spring Salmon House and places it on a layer of fresh cottonwood and willow leaves spread over the ground. A young assistant, who is decorated with bands of dyed and undyed cedar-bark, lifts from his left arm one of a number of two-foot strips of the same material carried there and lays it over the salmon's head so that part of the string is within its mouth. As he does this he says:

Ĭ'ĭdzwĕlxi, gāwāmĕlus,[1] "Accept, O Salmon."

Gāwāmĕlx is not the usual word for salmon, but signifies rather, "Food"; it is the designation used by supernatural beings for these fish and is hence applied by *cxoaq* to their prey, human beings.

After this has been done, eagle down is blown over the fish. A second salmon is likewise taken from the river, with the same cry of *xaē'ĕxi*, laid with its head on its predecessor's tail, and the same rite carried out. This is repeated till all are arranged in line, with their heads pointing upstream. The

[1] The causative form of the word.